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PHIL WANYERKA

A Fresh Look at a Maya Masterpiece

Fig. 1. El Peru stela 34 depicts a royal portrait of Na Kan Ajaw (Divine Woman of the Snake Polity) dressed as the maize god accompanied by a court dwarf. Stela, Maya, Late Classic period, AD 692; El Peru, Guatemala; limestone, 274.4 x 182.3 x 5 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, J. H. Wade Fund 1967.29.

Displayed prominently at the entrance to the pre-Columbian galleries of the Cleveland Museum of Art stands a masterpiece of Maya relief sculpture (fig. 1).[1] Carved with both images and hieroglyphic texts, this limestone monument is the front face of a larger freestanding stone or stela.[2] For the ancient Maya, such stelae functioned as political billboards commemorating the dynastic histories, political events, and religious rituals in which the ruling elite participated. Stelae were often placed in ceremonial plazas in front of important temples or other sacred buildings at Maya sites throughout the Classic period (AD 250–900). In 1974 Jeffrey Miller began the first detailed analysis of this stela,[3] and now, thanks to recent advances in deciphering Maya hieroglyphic writing, a wealth of new information can be presented. Further, the drawings of both images and texts made by John Montgomery in 1994 provide a more accurate and detailed view of the work than could be obtained from previously published photographs and drawings.

The front face of this stela depicts two elaborately attired figures: a large, imposing woman and, at her side, a dwarf. Framing them are hieroglyphic texts that name each personage, describe the rituals they perform, and explain the monument's purpose. In its original form, the stela was much larger than it appears today, and only the front has survived intact. The stela was broken in situ before its acquisition, and the lower portion has eroded. When removed from the stela, the front surface was cut into nineteen blocks, including four blocks that formed a lower register carved with an image of a supernatural creature on which the woman and dwarf stand. That register had been separated from the upper portion of the relief before its acquisition by the museum.

The original site of this monument has been debated for many years. In 1973 Joyce Marcus suggested that the stela came from Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico, based on the presence of an emblem glyph from that site, as well as iconographic links with other monuments found there.[4] Later that same year at a conference in Mexico, Jeffrey Miller consulted with Ian Graham and proposed that the Cleveland stela once stood with another unprovenanced stela (stela 33) now in the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth (fig. 2).[5] Following Marcus's assessment, Miller attributed both stelae to Calakmul.[6] Yet the Calakmul attribution has remained in

Fig. 2. El Peru stela 33 depicts a royal portrait of K'inich B'alam (Sun-Faced Jaguar). Stela, Maya, Late Classic period, c. AD 690s; El Peru, Guatemala; limestone, 272.7 x 173.7 cm. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, AP 70.2.

doubt because the Calakmul or "snake head" emblem glyph has been found in the inscriptions of Maya sites in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico.[7]

The exact provenance of Cleveland's stela was finally established in 1983 by Ian Graham while he was working at a site located along the Rio San Pedro Martir. At El Peru, some 115 km southwest of Calakmul in the Peten region of Guatemala, Graham discovered and identified the fragmented remains of the Kimbell and Cleveland stelae.[8] This evidence established indisputably that these two monuments were from El Peru and not Calakmul. Based on the sequence of his findings at El Peru, Graham assigned the stelae numbers (33 and 34, respectively), proposing that they stood together with a third stela (stela 35) in a linear sequence.

Signs of Ritual Commemoration

The symbolic motifs incorporated in the costuming and accouterments of the figures in the Cleveland stelae convey complex cosmological themes, among which are creation, supernatural relationships, and the under-

Map of the Maya region. Drawing by Kevin Brown.

world. Clothed in these cosmic symbols, the woman and dwarf are presented as divine beings at the center of the Maya universe. Because she looks to the left, with her body presented frontally and her arms held out to her sides, the symbols incorporated into her headdress, costume, and implements are displayed with maximum clarity.

The royal woman's elaborate costume is recognizable as that of the foliated maize god, one of the important beings in the Maya pantheon. The characteristic features of the maize god's costume include the quadripartite monster headdress, a beaded cape or skirt, and a shell waist ornament, all of which can be seen on this monument.[9] The maize god was responsible for rebirth and creation not only of the soul, but of all living things. In Maya cosmology, the earth was viewed as a giant maize field from which all things, real and supernatural, were born.[10] Thus the Maya used maize imagery as a metaphor for the progression of human life and the cycle of nature alike. These creation themes appear repeatedly in Maya art, linked to other symbolic themes that explore the nature of their universe. Many other scenes portraying the maize god also depicit a

dwarf, perhaps as a symbolic reference to the smaller second ear of maize commonly produced by the maize plant.[11] Thus, the image on this relief is much more than a portrait of two individuals; its many symbols convey cosmic themes of renewal and creation that help interpret the function of this stela.

As the following analysis of the hieroglyphic inscriptions demonstrates, the woman depicted on stela 34 wears the costume of the maize god in a celebration denoting the passage of a twenty-year period known to the Maya as a *k'atun*, much like the passage of a decade in our calendrical system. By wearing the attire of a god, a mortal being becomes divine, and here a woman is transfigured into the maize god to

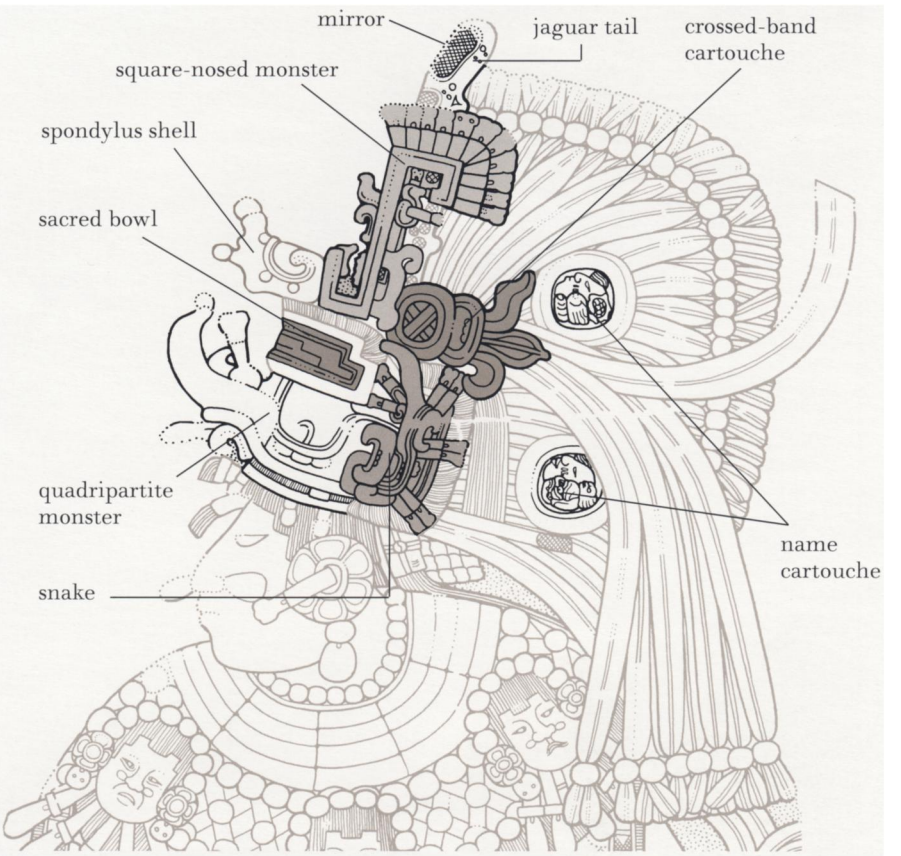


Fig. 3. Na Kan Ajaw's headdress featuring a portrait of the quadripartite monster (stela 34). Drawing by John Montgomery.

summon the associated powers of renewal and rebirth for the passage of the old k'atun and the inauguration of the new.[12]

The most important part of a Maya costume is often the headdress (fig. 3). This woman's headdress has several elements. Above her hairline is a profile head of the quadripartite monster adorned with beaded plumes and glyphs. This monster is the rear head of the supernatural serpent known as the cosmic or bicephalic monster, a creature with a long body, depicted either as a reptile or a sky band representing the arc of the heavens, and a head at each end. The cosmic monster is often depicted in accession scenes.[13] Its front head is identified as the planet Venus while the rear head represents the fleshless head of the sun.[14] In the Maya view the sun passes cyclically across the sky, then dips below the horizon to traverse the underworld. At sunrise and sunset the sun hovers between life and death, the state represented by the fleshless head of the cosmic monster. Thus this monster symbolizes the path between the natural and the supernatural world,[15] and its head is a powerful expression of supernatural intervention.

An elaborate symbol known as the quadripartite badge identifies the woman's headdress as the rear head of the cosmic monster. Embedded into its forehead is a ceramic bowl similar to the type used in Maya caching rituals. The quadripartite monster can take the form of the sacred bowl used in sacrificial rites to evoke the great vision serpent from the underworld. In images from the Classic period, Maya rulers performed bloodletting rituals to conjure rearing serpents from whose mouths emerged patron gods or ancestral beings. The bowls used to hold the sacred offerings and instruments used in these rites were seen as portals to the underworld. Three sacred objects rise up out of the hallowed bowl in the woman's headdress.[16] Projecting to the left, the spondylus (mollusk) shell symbolizes the primordial sea from which the first creation arose and can also refer to the watery depths of the underworld in which the cosmic monster resides. Such shells held blood offerings and were often placed in sacred caches.

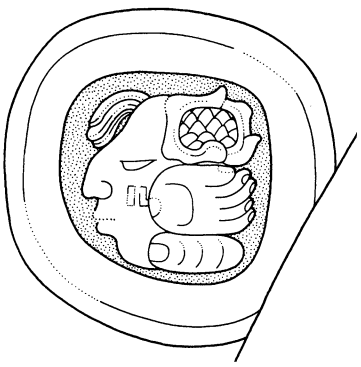
The second symbolic object, rising vertically from the bowl, is a square-nosed monster head. In this version of the quadripartite badge, a square-nosed head has replaced the more commonly depicted stingray spine, the primary instrument used to perforate the skin in bloodletting rituals.[17] The square-nosed head here has been interpreted as a zoomorphic version of the pistil of the Maya world tree's flower.[18] Throughout Mesoamerica, the world tree *(axis mundi)* symbolized the center of the Maya universe. Its branches connected the sky to the earth and its roots connected the earth to the underworld. The blossom of the world tree was viewed as a metaphor for the *ch'ulel* (holiness) that all things possessed.[19]

The last object rising from the sacred bowl is a sprouting cartouche with crossed bands, a symbol frequently found as a pectoral ornament worn by Maya rulers.[20] These bundled cartouches sometimes contain death symbolism, signaling the arrival of a person's *nagual* (soul companion).[21] In Maya cosmology, the nagual is defined as a companion spirit or supernatural being with whom a person shares his or her consciousness.[22] In this case, a passage in the hieroglyphic text reveals that this woman summons forth a great vision serpent as her companion spirit for the ritual enacted on this monument. The process of summoning one's companion spirit was usually induced through bloodletting rituals, and so these three sacred objects together with the maize god costume signal the spiritual transformation of this woman into her underworld soul companion. Although the hieroglyphic text does not mention the act of bloodletting in this scene, it certainly must have been a part of the ritual commemoration.

Another zoomorphic creature, most likely reptilian and perhaps a snake, appears in the earflare assemblage of the quadripartite monster. Because snakes swallow their prey whole and shed their skin, they were revered throughout Mesoamerica and seen as the vehicle for rebirth and transformation.[23] Here the snake reinforces the characteristics of the maize god and the symbolism attached to this costume.

Quetzal plumes, beaded near the ends, spout from the back of the quadripartite monster, creating what in antiquity must have been a stunning display of iridescent greens and blues. The feather tips point in different directions, as though quivering with movement, and one long

Na Nal K'al



Na Kan Ajaw

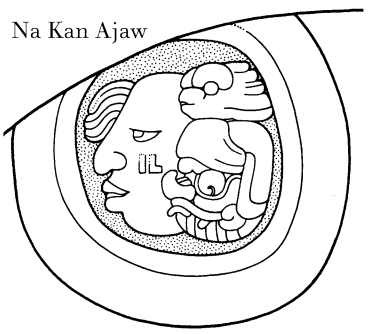


Fig. 4. Na Kan Ajaw's name as it appears in her headdress (stela 34). Drawing by John Montgomery.

plume sweeps upward, as if caught by a breeze. Jade beads also adorn the woman's hair, which flows gently off her left shoulder and is treated in typical Maya fashion. At the top of the headdress, a small mirror, probably made of obsidian originally, attaches to a jaguar tail that continues down behind the square-nosed monster head. Mirrors were used to reflect light and could also have supernatural connotations involving lightning, fire, and the underworld. Finally, two glyph cartouches stating the woman's name and her lineage nestle among the plumes in the headdress. The top cartouche records her name exactly as it is recorded on the lower text register, as will be shown later in this article, but these glyphs still elude deciphering. The lower cartouche records the second part of her name as Na Kan Ajaw (Royal Woman of the Snake Polity), again referring to the kingdom of Calakmul (fig. 4).[24]

Positioned at Na Kan Ajaw's waist is a fish-like creature known as the xok monster (fig. 5). This creature sports a nasal curl between its eyes, fins sweeping down and outward from its face, serrated teeth in two groups beneath its upper lip, and a spondylus shell almost as large as the monster's head emerging from its mouth. The oval-shaped mirror sign on its forehead marks this monster as a divine being. *Xok* is a Maya word for "shark"; thus this image is a zoomorphic representation of that fish.[25] Xok can also mean "waist" or "hips" in several Maya languages and may thus refer to fertility and rebirth.[26] The spondylus shell could represent the womb and birth because such shells were commonly used as recep-

Fig. 5. Xok monster assemblage (stela 34).

tacles for sacred objects.[27] Another zoomorphic profile head similar to the one in the headdress hangs from a mat design just below the xok monster/spondylus shell assemblage. The mat design, a symbol of authority, evokes the woven mat on which rulers sat.[28]

Na Kan Ajaw wears a spectacular array of jade jewelry, including a nose ornament, beaded wristlets, a huge earflare assemblage in the form of a six-petaled flower, and a beaded necklace with three exquisitely carved jade portrait heads and dangling tubular beads. The amount of jade she wears is staggering because of its weight and the wealth it represents. Jade and quetzal feathers were the most precious materials in Mesoamerica because they were rare and the color of new vegetation, especially the vital maize plants. Perhaps more important, the color of jade was also one of the five associated with the directions. According to Maya cosmology, green was identified with the fifth vertical direction, the "center" or "heart" of the four cardinal directions.

According to recent research, today's Maya people believe the *huipil* (dress belted at the waist) encloses a woman in sacred space, and its designs radiate outward in all four directions of the universe.[29] This important clue gives further significance to Na Kan Ajaw's maize god costume, which transforms her from a mortal into a divine being who embodies the vertical green axis at the center of the Maya universe. The textile designs along the sleeves of both arm openings also have important symbolic connotations (fig. 6). The crosshatch designs create a diamond pat-

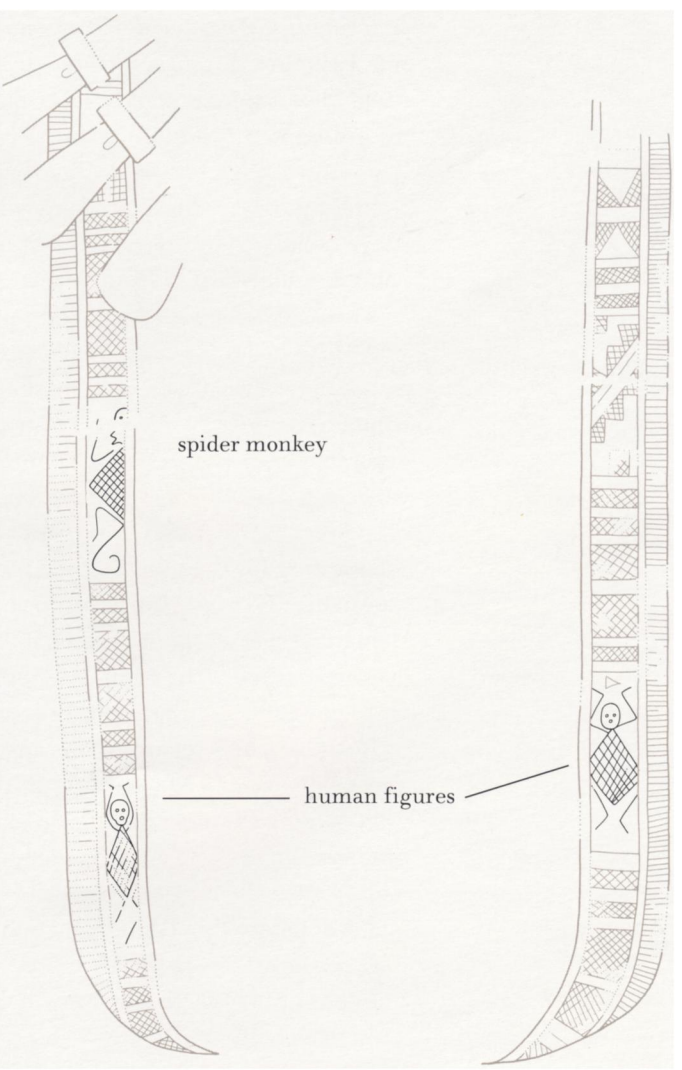


Fig. 6. Textile fringe worn by Na Kan Ajaw (stela 34). Drawing by John Montgomery.

Fig. 7. Bow and serpent scepter (stela 34).

tern that may be interpreted as stars in the heavens. In addition, three small schematic figures are obvious. The figure in profile on the left appears to be a spider monkey as evidenced by the long, upturned tail. According to Maya myth, monkeys and other creatures of the forest symbolize the chaos and immorality that threaten social harmony.[30] The two frontal figures are human and may be related to the earthlord of modern Maya beliefs.[31] Finally, on her feet Na Kan Ajaw wears ornate high-backed sandals tied in front with a small knot.

The objects Na Kan Ajaw holds are symbols of divine kingship and war. With her right hand she grasps an object known as the bow and serpent scepter, frequently held by rulers in accession rites (fig. 7).[32] This scepter (recognizable by narrow strips of cloth tied down its length and decorated with woven designs and T-shaped flap openings) may be a battle standard.[33] The sacred symbols it incorporates reflect the supernatural powers of the gods. Once again, a profile head of a reptilian monster, substituting for the square-nosed monster, can be seen as a metaphorical representation of the flower from the world tree. By incorporating this element as part of the scepter or standard, Na Kan Ajaw can visually declare that she is the bringer of the holiness that activates the world tree's power.[34]

Related beliefs regarding the spiritual powers of emblems of office survive today in some Maya communities. According to ethnologist Evon Vogt, who has studied the highland Maya community of Zinacantan in Chiapas, the scepters or staffs used by Maya officials contained powerful souls, placed there by ancestral gods and regarded as infallible instruments of power.[35] Dreams transmit messages from the inner soul of the staff, indicating its power as an instrument of divine rulership.

In her left hand Na Kan Ajaw holds a small decorated shield (apparently made with pyrite mosaic) or perhaps the carapace of a large turtle

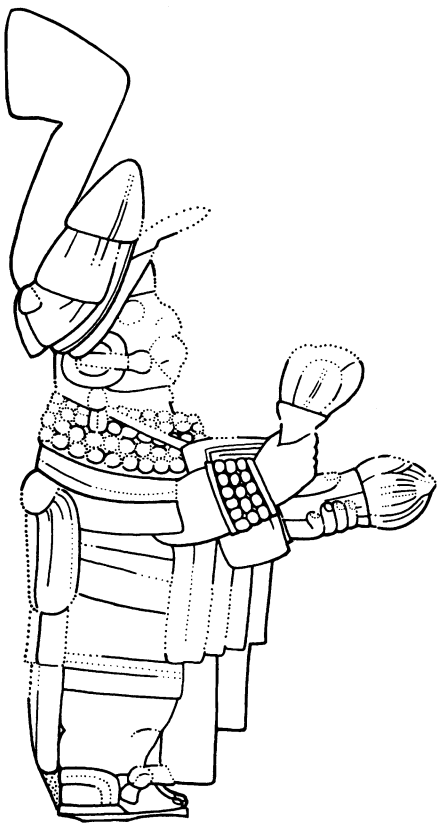


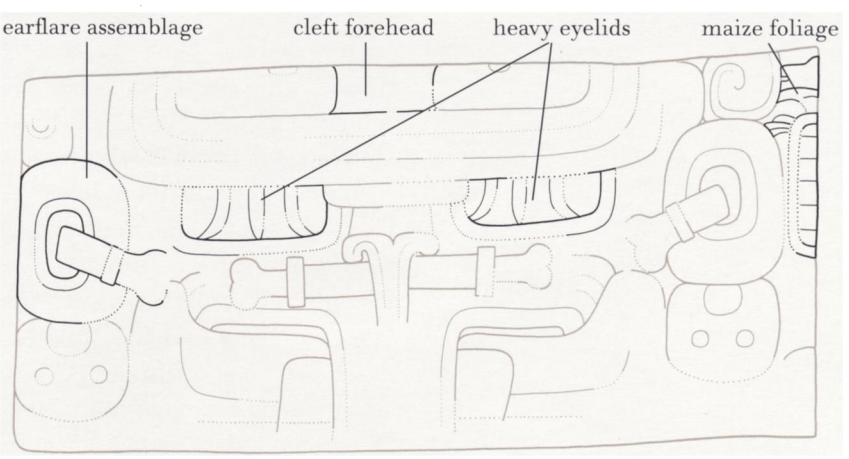
Fig. 8. Dwarfs, common in Maya art, served as entertainers to the royal court (stela 34). Drawing by John Montgomery.

Fig. 9. The basal register of stela 34, now lost, featured a portrait of the witz monster. Drawing by John Montgomery.

(as suggested by interlocking elements visible along its edge). The beaded plumes in a quatrefoil arrangement around the edge of the shield appear to sway, which could mean that Na Kan Ajaw danced as the maize god with the sacred implements of kingship and war.

A finely attired court dwarf, holding in each hand a pair of objects with handles, stands in profile facing Na Kan Ajaw (fig. 8). His costume includes a fringed cape, turban cloth headdress tied at the front, high-backed sandals, and an impressive array of jade jewelry. The dwarf may also have a mirror tied to his chest so that Na Kan Ajaw can see herself while she enacts the ritual. Commonly portrayed members of Maya courts, dwarfs may have served as entertainers. They were also revered as possessors of supernatural powers that could bring rain. In painted scenes, the maize god is often seen dancing with a dwarf, an allusion that confirms the interpretation of Na Kan Ajaw's costume.[36]

A close examination of the bottom edge of this monument reveals the faint outlines of additional imagery, suggesting the existence of a lower portion. Using photographs of a relief now in private hands, Ian Graham has demonstrated that a huge mask representing the *witz* or mountain monster served as a pedestal for the two individuals depicted on the stela (fig. 9). Among this monster's features are a cleft forehead, heavy eyelids,



and maize foliage sprouting from the earflare assemblage.[37] The witz monster pedestal, a common motif, is found on many of the monuments at El Peru and may indicate a supernatural location.[38]

Dating the Monument

As mentioned earlier, Cleveland's stela was once part of a sculptural ensemble displayed in a plaza at El Peru. According to Ian Graham's reconstruction, stelae 33, 34, and 35 stood in a row facing northeast. Stela 34 (the Cleveland stela), the central monument, had a small altar (or throne) positioned in front of it. To either side stood stela 33 (the Kimbell stela) and stela 35, each of which portrays a male figure that faces inward, toward Na Kan Ajaw on stela 34. This type of monument arrangement was common, especially at Calakmul, where two, three, or four stelae were erected to commemorate k'atun endings.[39] Stela 35 is badly eroded, and the identity of the individual portrayed is uncertain. He is depicted holding a double-headed serpent bar, a representation of the cosmic monster and an important element of royal regalia. Stela 33 portrays an individual

identified by the inscriptions as K'inich B'alam (Sun-Faced Jaguar), ruler of El Peru (see fig. 2). In all likelihood he was Na Kan Ajaw's husband, although this supposition cannot be established definitively from the El Peru inscriptions currently available for study. Paired monuments featuring royal couples, however, were popular at Calakmul, and marriage and accession may have served as the catalysts for these types of pairings.[40]

The interpretation of stelae 33 and 34 as husband and wife portraits is supported by the many elements of costuming and accouterments the two share and also by their complementary poses. Like Na Kan Ajaw, K'inich B'alam stands with his body posed frontally, feet turned out. His head, shown in profile, faces hers, and he holds an identical shield in his raised left arm. On his breast hang three jade heads like those worn by Na Kan Ajaw. The ruler's headdress is similar to hers in size and elaboration, but not in its details. Water lilies and fish are important elements (repeated elsewhere in his costume) that may relate to the watery depths of the underworld from which the gods were born.[41]

The central position of Na Kan Ajaw's portrait and her maize god costume (usually reserved for male rulers celebrating k'atun anniversaries) suggest a special position, probably attributable to her membership in the ruling lineage of Calakmul. This affiliation is proclaimed by the name glyphs in her headdress and in the inscriptions on stela 34 (see below). At the time these three stelae were carved, Calakmul and its great rival, Tikal, were the two most powerful Maya states. Archaeological research has revealed that Calakmul contained more than six thousand structures, making it the largest Maya city yet discovered.[42] El Peru, Dos Pilas, Cancuen, Naranjo, Caracol, Piedras Negras, and Yaxchilan were all part of an allied network of satellite sites under Calakmul's direct hegemony.[43]

In the latter half of the seventh century, Calakmul's greatest ruler, Yich'ak or Ich'ak K'ak' (nicknamed Jaguar Paw Smoke or Jaguar Paw Fire), consolidated political power within Calakmul's sphere of influence through military alliance, elite intermarriage, and royal visitation.[44] These strategies are documented throughout the inscriptions of El Peru, Yaxchilan, and Naachtun.[45] According to an inscription on Naachtun stela 18, a royal woman from Calakmul appears to have married into the El Peru dynasty. This text likely refers to Na Kan Ajaw, based on a tentative dating of stela 18 to 9.11.0.0.0, just twenty years earlier than stela 34.[46] Unfortunately, the text in question is badly eroded.[47] Yet another inscription on a small altar, thought to have come from the Calakmul/El Peru region and now in the Dallas Museum of Art, mentions several royal women from Calakmul. In a passage dated to 9.12.6.16.17 (30 April 679), a little less than fourteen years before the 9.13.0.0.0 k'atun ending, a royal Calakmul woman is mentioned "arriving." Whether this passage refers to the arrival of Na Kan Ajaw at El Peru is not certain, but it certainly falls within the realm of possibility.[48] That Na Kan Ajaw's portrait had a prominent place at El Peru demonstrates her importance as a living, tangible symbol of the alliance between Calakmul and its subsidiary site. As the analysis below will demonstrate, the hieroglyphic texts on stela 34 reiterate the value El Peru's rulers placed on this relationship.

Examination of the known fragments of stela 34 (fig. 10) make it clear that a long hieroglyphic inscription of at least ninety-seven carved glyph blocks was recorded on three sides of this monument. The text can be broken down into three parts. The first part, recorded on the sides in twenty-seven glyph blocks, gives a long count date with supporting lunar

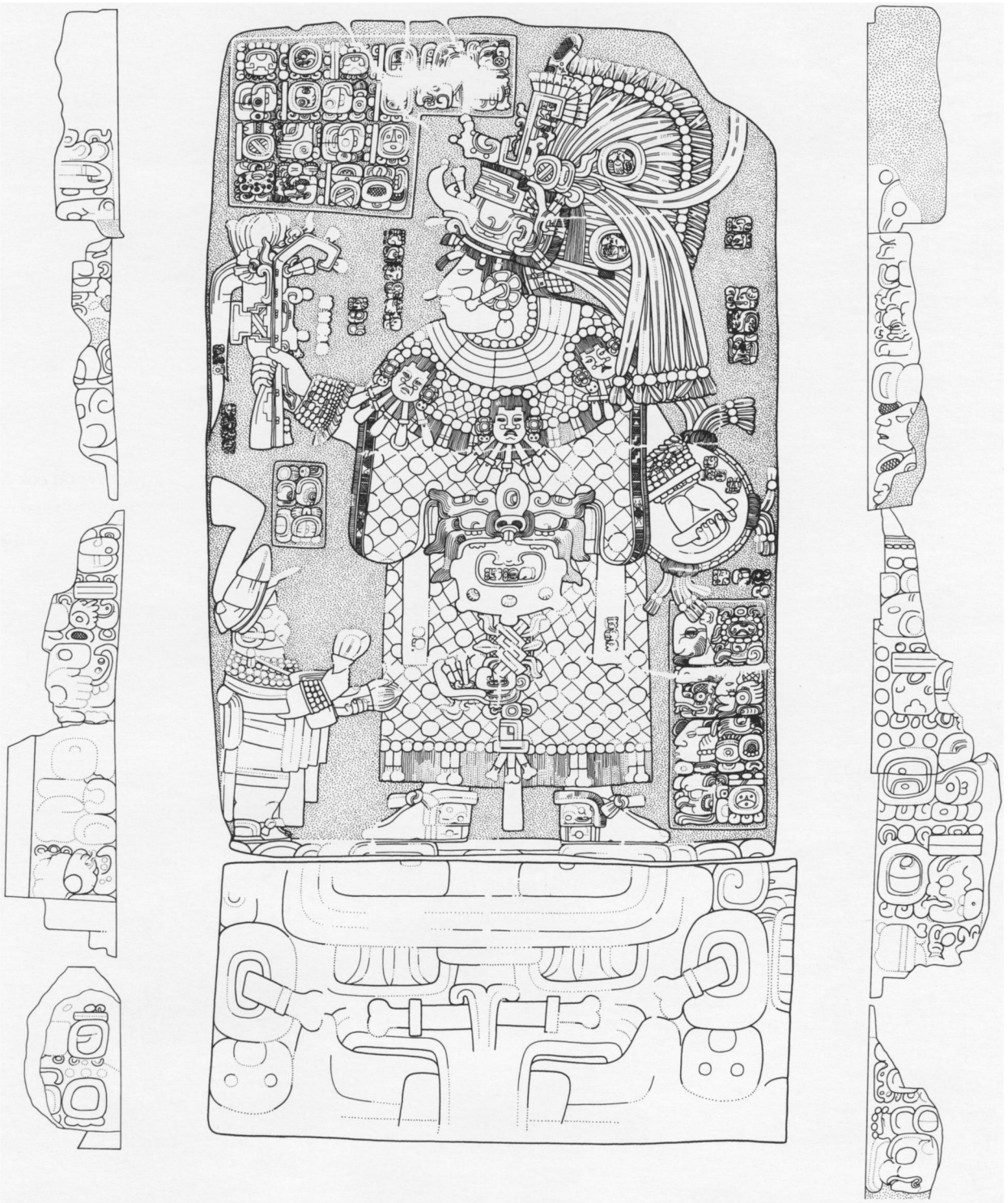


Fig. 10. Stela 34, El Peru, Guatemala. Front drawing by John Montgomery. Basal register drawing by John Montgomery from a photograph provided by Ian Graham. Side texts by Kevin Brown based on a drawing by Ian Graham.

information followed by another later date (fig. 11).[49] Unfortunately, the glyphs are heavily fragmented and thus much historical information about the events and actors described on the side texts is lost. The second part, on the front face in thirty glyph blocks, records two events and the names of the protagonists. The third and final part consists of forty-one small, incised glyphs scattered over the surface of the stela that name the individuals responsible for its creation and design.

Regrettably, the side texts were severely damaged when the front face of the monument was removed. The left side begins with a completely obliterated long count date. The numeral coefficients are lost and only the vestiges of the main signs remain. The supporting lunar information

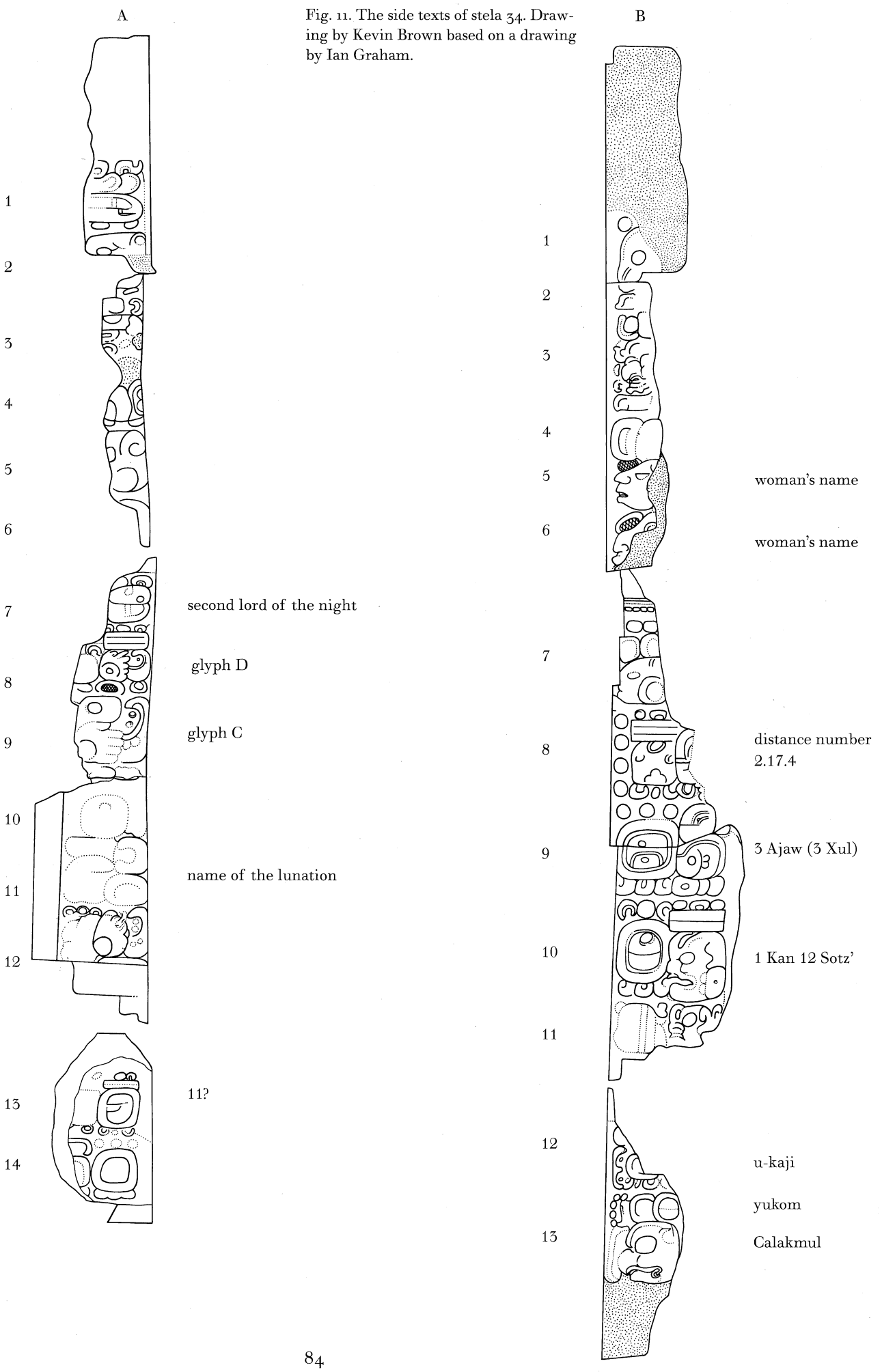
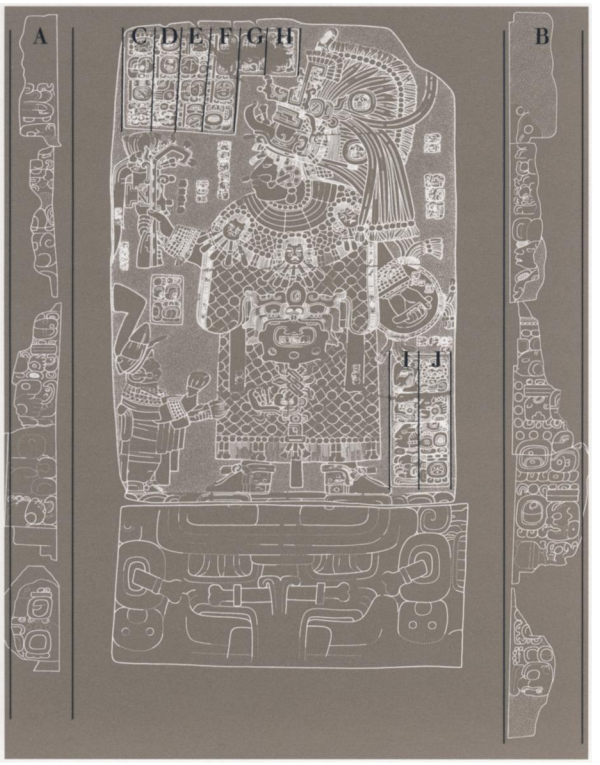


Fig. 11. The side texts of stela 34. Drawing by Kevin Brown based on a drawing by Ian Graham.



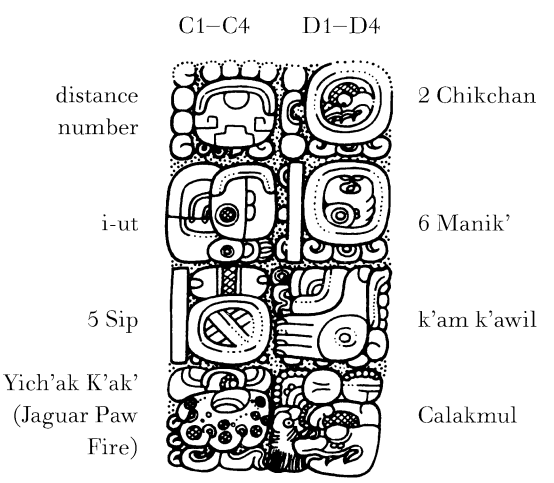
Schematic map of front and sides of stela 34, indicating registers A–J.

about the date indicates that the second lord of the night was in office (A7). Glyph D calculated the age of the moon to be sixteen days (A8). The following glyph, known as glyph C, records the number of lunations; however, the coefficient, which could have helped secure an initial long count date, is lost (A9). The name of the lunation follows (A11) and it, too, is missing. The last glyph block (A14) appears to record part of a calendar round for the long count date; however, only a numerical coefficient of eleven remains, not enough for a reconstruction.

The right side text appears to record a woman's name (B5, B6), which can be confirmed by the presence of the female prefix sign read *na*. While the name is now lost, it may have been a reference to Na Kan Ajaw. A distance number (B8) indicates that 17 winals, 4 k'ins, and an unknown number of tuns have passed to reach a new date recorded as 1 K'an 12 Sotz' (B10).[50]

From this interpretation, the earlier date must be 9.12.5.0.0 (3 Ajaw 3 Xul) or AD 5 June 677, and the later date must be 9.12.7.17.4 (1 K'an 12 Sotz') or 4 May 680. Following the calendar round is a verb and a noun phrase that, unfortunately, have also eroded. It is clear, however, that the individual named here was in some way connected to Calakmul, as seen by the last two glyphs in this portion of the text. The faint outline of an agency expression glyph (B12), read *u-kaji* (by the action of or by the business of), can be seen as the agent for this passage.[51] In other examples where individuals are named in association with the Calakmul emblem glyph, it is clear that u-kaji is followed by the *yukom* title, specifically calling the Calakmul king an "alliance maker," which implies that the individual named here undertook some action "by the action of, the Joiner, who was the divine lord of Calakmul" (B13).[52] Such a reference to the current king of Calakmul on a monument at El Peru suggests that El Peru was a vassal state with allegiances to the Calakmul polity. Confirmation of this relationship can be seen on the front text of stela 34.

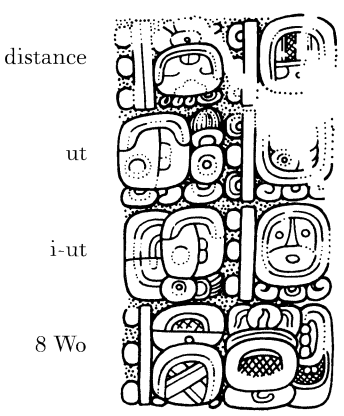
On the monument's front surface are three hieroglyphic captions that proceed clockwise beginning with the upper register. The text is read in double columns, left to right, and top to bottom within each glyph block. The upper text begins with a distance number counting the number of days from an earlier event (C1). That earlier event may or may not be recorded on this monument because the side texts do not allow for a detailed analysis. The distance number recorded is 4 winals and 2 k'ins (82 days), which was added from the day simply recorded in the 260-day calendar as 2 Chikchan (D1).[53] In order to determine what the correspond-

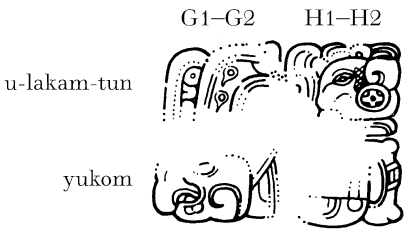


ing long count date should be, an examination of the next calendar round date is warranted (D2, C3). That calendar round date is recorded as 6 Manik' 5 Sip and thus could refer to a number of corresponding long count dates because that calendar round repeats every fifty-two years. Yet this monument can be dated to the Late Classic period, based on a nominal reference stating the name of the best known Calakmul king (C4), Yich'ak K'ak' (Jaguar Paw Fire), which narrows the time span of the possible date of this particular calendar round. From a handful of references to Jaguar Paw Fire found within the written records of this region, it is clear that he lived AD 649–695. This information is enough to verify the long count date of 6 Manik' 5 Sip as being 9.12.13.17.7 or 6 April 686. By subtracting the distance number from this second calendar round date, the long count date for the first event was 9.12.13.13.5 (2 Chikchan 8 K'ayab) or 14 January 686. In this case, the 8 K'ayab is not recorded but rather implied by the 2 Chikchan date. The intervening glyph (C2) simply reads *i-ut* (then), and it acts as a focus marker indicating that the distance number is to be added.

The action for this day reads *k'am k'awil* (the God K scepter was grasped), a reference to the first act of a ruler's accession (D3).[54] One of the first public rituals in a ruler's accession is "taking" or "displaying" the ritual objects of rulership. In this case, the scepter is specified, but in other examples raising the royal headdress is also a metaphor for accession. This act of accession refers not to Na Kan Ajaw, the main protagonist depicted on stela 34, but rather to Yich'ak K'ak' (C4), the divine king of the snake-head polity or Calakmul (D4). Although Na Kan Ajaw holds a royal scepter of different form, she is not the person mentioned in this portion of the hieroglyphic text. Thus her actions, as seen on this monument, can be viewed as commemorating that important day. As a royal woman from Calakmul, Na Kan Ajaw's participation in this celebration served to underline El Peru's affiliation with the Calakmul dynasty.

The second passage of this text begins with a new distance number of 13 k'ins, 0 winals, (E1), and 6 tuns (F1), indicating a change in the chronology. Following the distance number is another focus marker (E2) read *ut* (then), indicating the chronology will move forward in time. To ensure the proper chronology, the text restates 6 Manik' (F2), indicating that the new distance number is to be added from the 6 Manik' 5 Sip date or 9.12.13.17.7. The date reached then is 8 Ajaw (F3) 8 Wo (E4), 9.13.0.0.0 or 15 March 692, which marked the end of the twelfth k'atun, an important event for a Maya ruler to celebrate. Following the date is a verb describing the action celebrated on 9.13.0.0.0. The verb (F4) is read

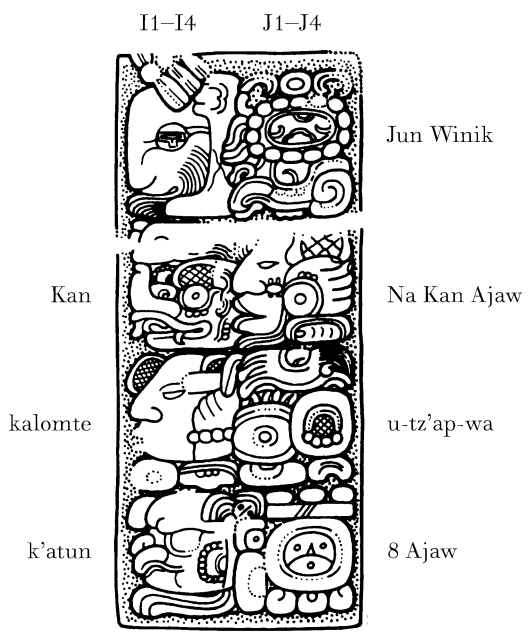




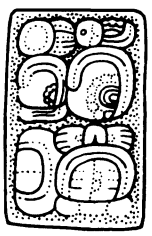
tz'apaj (was planted or erected into the ground).[55] The object erected is named (G1) as being *u-lakam-tun* (his grand stone).[56] This is a direct reference to the erection of stela 34 as a ritual act, by Na Kan Ajaw under the aegis of Jaguar Paw Fire, in commemoration of the k'atun ending. The erection of this monument also commemorates Jaguar Paw Fire's accession some six years earlier.

Additional information on political and ritual events at Calakmul and El Peru can be derived from a monument fragment now in the Tamayo Museum in Oaxaca, Mexico (long thought to belong to the Kimbell stela). According to the inscription on this fragment, the king of El Peru, K'inich B'alam, acceded to office in the company of Jaguar Paw Fire,[57] suggesting that Jaguar Paw Fire was present at El Peru to witness K'inich B'alam's accession and that perhaps these monuments (stelae 33, 34, and 35) were erected to acknowledge El Peru's subordination to the powerful Calakmul dynasty. The text of stela 34 continues with an auxiliary verb (H1) read *u-b'a* (by the action of) and a nominal phrase should follow.[58] Unfortunately, the text is too eroded (G2, H2) to ascertain anything more, but perhaps the yukom title was recorded here (G2) as a generic reference to the Calakmul king.

The third text passage, located below Na Kan Ajaw's shield, begins with the name of a vision serpent (J1, I2) first identified by Linda Schele as Jun Winik K'an.[59] As previously mentioned, vision serpents were conjured through rituals that involved piercing the body to produce blood that was then burned in braziers as an offering to the gods. Naming this vision serpent in the inscription may signal the spiritual transformation of Na Kan Ajaw into a divine being. Directly following the name of the vision serpent is the first, still undeciphered part of Na Kan Ajaw's personal name (J2). Following her name is a title read *kalomte,* which may



K1–K2



ak

mas

be a reference to nobles who ruled provincial towns.[60] It also appears to be a title associated with war.[61] The passage ends with a restatement of the 9.13.0.0.0 long count date described in a different manner. Again, the verb (J3) used to describe the action is *u-tz'ap-wa*, the past tense of tz'apaj, stating that the action was a result of "its planting." The object planted was the k'atun (I4), another metaphorical reference to the passing of the twelfth k'atun on the day 8 Ajaw (J4). In this case, the 8 Ajaw is a simple and precise way of restating the date of the featured event on 9.13.0.0.0 (8 Ajaw 8 Wo). Although this monument mentions Jaguar Paw Fire's accession, the featured event is the erection of this monument in his honor and Na Kan Ajaw's participation in the ritual celebrations for the passing of the twelfth k'atun by summoning Jun Winik Kan, a vision serpent.

The last glyph block, directly over the dwarf's head, records his name (K1) as *ak* (dwarf).[62] The dwarf title (K2) reads *mas* (goblin) and refers to the frightening aspect of dwarfs in Maya cosmology.[63] Today among some modern Maya groups, the dwarf is placed in the same category as the dead.[64] In addition, dwarfs were directly connected with the earth and the underworld and thus singled out as special beings given royal privileges as court attendants.[65]

By examining the chronology of all the known fragments of stela 34, a new chronology emerges.

DATE	EVENT	ACTOR	GREGORIAN CALENDAR DATE
Left side text (A)			
?. ?. ?. ?. ? (11?)	—	—	—
Right side text (B)			
9.12. 5. 0. 0 (3 Ajaw 3 Xul)	Period ending	— & yukom	5 June 677
2.17. 4			
9.12. 7.17. 4 (1 K'an 12 Sotz')	—	—	4 May 680
Front text			
9.12.13.13. 5 (2 Chikchan 8 K'ayab)	—	Calakmul King	14 January 686
4. 2 (passage one)			
9.12.13.17. 7 (6 Manik' 5 Sip)	Accession	Jaguar Paw Fire	6 April 686
6. 0.13 (passage two)			
9.13. 0. 0. 0 (8 Ajaw 8 Wo)	Period ending	Na Kan Ajaw	15 March 692

The front text of stela 34 can be loosely paraphrased. Passage one: Four months and two days have passed since 14 January 686, then came 6 April 686, on which the scepter was grasped or displayed by Jaguar Paw Fire, the divine lord of the snake polity. Passage two: Six years, zero months, and thirteen days have passed since 6 April 686, then came 15 March 692 on which this grand stone was erected in his honor by the actions of. . . . Passage three: . . . . The vision serpent along with the royal woman of the snake polity, the provincial lord, planted (or ended) the passing of the twenty-year period on 15 March 692.

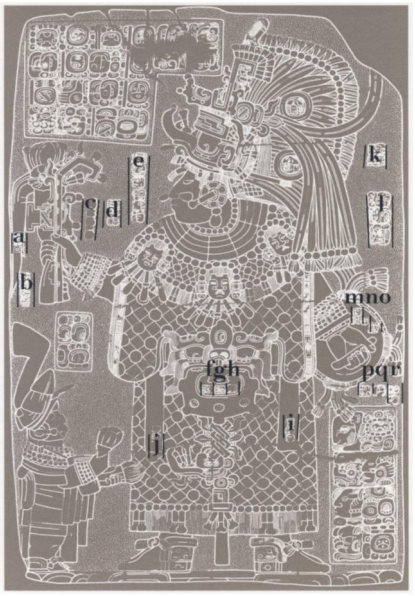
The Artists

The twelve incised secondary texts surrounding and even intruding on the portrait of Na Kan Ajaw make stela 34 especially intriguing to epigraphers and art historians. At least eight of these secondary texts can be shown to represent the names and titles of artists responsible for the creation of this monument. For the most part, the sculptors, painters, and architects who crafted Maya art have remained anonymous. Artist signatures in the western region of the Maya lowlands seem to be confined to a period of roughly 150 years during the Late Classic period.[66] The presence of these signatures suggests that some Maya artists enjoyed an elevated status unusual in Mesoamerica. In general, the iconography and style of Maya art conformed to established conventions, although regional variations did exist.[67] By allowing artists to sign their works, the ruling elite, who commissioned and controlled monumental art as a form of dynastic propaganda, publicly acknowledged the artists' skills as members of the royal court. The high status of some artists can be confirmed by the appearance of the *ajaw* (lord) title used in several of the sculptors' names here on stela 34.

While artist signatures are rare, even more unusual is that at least eight artist names appear on this monument, which naturally complicates the task of recognizing the work of specific individuals in this relief. According to Montgomery and Tate, who have both identified the hands of certain artists in the monuments at Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras,[68] traits useful for distinguishing individual artists include the differences in the shape of the glyph blocks, the slant of the rows of glyph blocks, the fluidity of shapes, the composition of internal details, the quality of the line, the degrees of modeling, and the depth of relief.

Unfortunately, the names of artists mentioned on stela 34 cannot be identified on any other monument at El Peru or Calakmul at this time. Most of the monuments of these two sites have yet to be adequately photographed and drawn, making a comprehensive comparison of individual artist's styles impossible. One monument that is available for study and comparison is stela 33 (the Kimbell stela), which once stood next to stela 34 at El Peru. While the monuments share similar poses, accouterments, and compositions, the two appear to have been carved by different hands. Stela 34 is carved in high relief, permitting the sculptor to distinguish many overlapping planes. Stela 33 has a markedly flatter appearance, resulting in less legible iconography.

The manufacture of stelae was a monumental task that certainly involved specialized labor. How that labor was divided and carried out may never be known precisely, but it probably followed the following sequence. First, the stone was quarried by stonecutters and rolled or



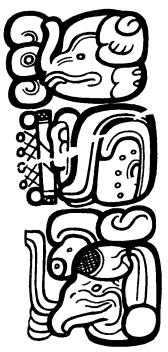
Schematic map of front of stela 34, indicating registers a–r.

dragged from the quarry to the erection site within the city. Because a monument could be damaged in transit, carving at the quarry was unlikely. Once at the site, the monument would have been placed upright, with the base buried securely in the ground. At that point, masons smoothed the stone's surface in preparation for carving. On the smooth stone surface a master artist would then outline the sculptural composition as a guide for the sculptors. Once outlined, the monument was either carved in relief, as in the case of stela 34, or incised following the painted line. Finally, after it had been carved, it was polished or burnished and ritually painted.[69]

The twelve secondary texts found on stela 34 attest to the complex and possibly ritual nature of the stone-carving process. Of these twelve, eight record artist names, one is a reference to a historic person, and three are too eroded to make any certain conclusions. The names and titles found within the texts reveal interesting insights about the division of labor in the creation of stela 34. Artist name phrases usually begin with or contain a glyph in the form of a bat head read *yu-xul(u)*.[70] In the colonial Tzeltal language, the root *ux* means "to scratch or scrape as on bricks." Based on that entry, Nikolai Grube extended the meaning to "his carving" as an honorific title used by artists.[71] In Yukatek Maya, *xul* means "to finish" in the sense of burnishing or polishing, and thus it is clear that yu-xul refers to artists or sculptors who "scrape, scratch, or finish" a stone carving.[72]

Compared with the glyphs of the main text, the secondary texts were all carved on a smaller scale, except the two directly behind Na Kan Ajaw's headdress. Based on the slightly larger size of these texts, it would appear that these two artists were given higher status than the rest. The largest of these secondary texts, recorded in three glyph blocks, may be the master artist or sculptor of stela 34, Aj Chuk Ajaw (l1, l3). The word *chuk* can mean "captor of," which would not seem to make sense here in this text, or "to smudge or stain with carbon," in other words, "to paint."[73] *Aj* is a demonstrative pronoun referring to the individual's title as "he of," in a sense calling the artist "he of the smudging or staining." In addition, he carries the ajaw title as part of his name, labeling him either as a "royal smudger or stainer" or calling him "he of the royal smudging or staining." Based on the size and prominence of this individual's text and titles, it is probably safe to say that he was the master artist or sculptor for stela 34.

l1–l3



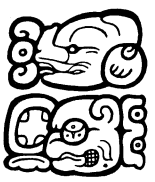
yu-xul

Aj Chuk

Ajaw

The second largest text, recorded in two glyph blocks, also names an artist or sculptor (k1, k2). This name phrase begins with the yu-xul title followed by his personal name recorded as Kan Ek' Ajaw. Kan Ek (bright star or great star) is the name for the planet Venus in Maya codices and Spanish colonial documents.[74] This individual also carries the ajaw title, as can be seen by the small ajaw face in the eye of the creature featured in this glyph. Based on the size of this text and the association with the planet Venus, this artist was probably Aj Chuk Ajaw's assistant or the second most important artist or sculptor for stela 34.

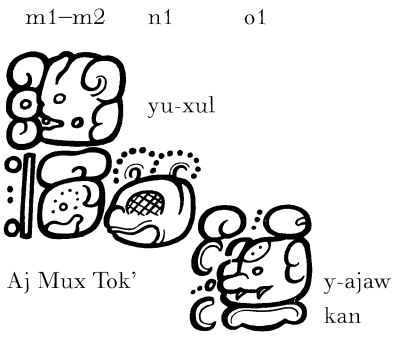
k1–k2

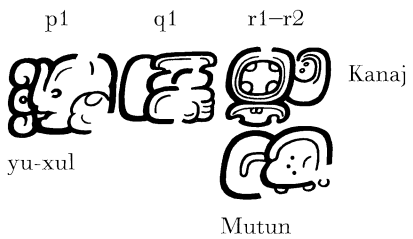


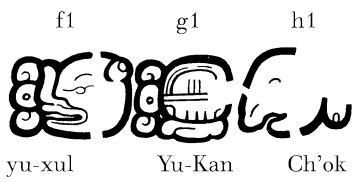
yu-xul

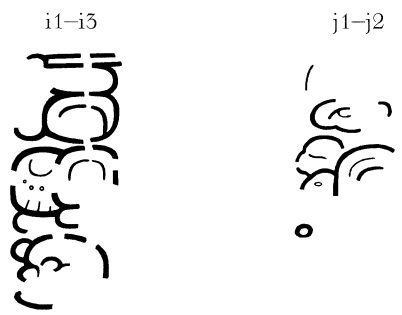
Kan Ek' Ajaw

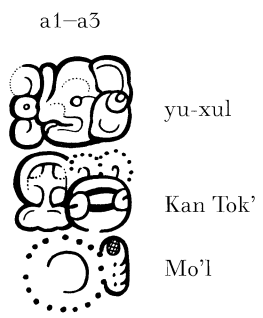
Another artist signature with three more unique titles appears on Na Kan Ajaw's shield. Again the artist is mentioned with the yu-xul title, labeling him as a "scratcher, scraper, or finisher" (m1), followed by another interesting set of glyphs that read Aj Mux Tok' (m2, n1). *Mux* (composition) and *tok'* (flint) may be titles referring to this artist as "he of the flint composition," as perhaps a way of describing a sculptor who uses











flint as a chisel in carving.[75] He also carries the *y-ajaw kan* title (o1) as part of his name, which can be interpreted two ways. The first simply refers to this individual being the "first high priest" in the sense of being the king's second in command or a priest belonging to the royal family.[76] However, y-ajaw can also be interpreted as a possessive form of ajaw, meaning "his lord," and with kan (the snake-head sign) as a possible representation of the Calakmul emblem glyph, the phrase could simply refer to this individual as being a "vassal lord of the king of the snake polity." Either interpretation is valid. In fact, both interpretations could be used at the same time according to Maya conventions.

Located just below Na Kan Ajaw's shield is another artist signature beginning with the yu-xul title (p1). The name is partially eroded (q1), but the second part of his name (r1) reads Kanaj (to learn, or precious, or yellow).[77] The last part of his name is recorded as Mutun (r2) and *tun* can mean "stone." Thus this artist may have been an apprentice whose name was Kanaj Mutun (precious or yellow stone), perhaps referring to the actual monument itself because limestone is naturally a yellowish color and, once finished, the monument would be considered precious or sacred.

The fifth artist signature is on the shell at Na Kan Ajaw's waist. Again, his name begins with the yu-xul title (f1) followed by the first part of his name (g1). The glyph reads Yu-Kan, which can also have two separate meanings. *Kan* can mean "serpent or sky," and with the *yu* possessive prefix, yu-kan would mean "his serpent or sky." In this particular context, the "sky" meaning is the more likely reading.[78] The last part of his name (h1), Ch'ok, has a variety of meanings. In Proto-Cholan, *ch'ok* means "unripe, sprout, immature, or a young child."[79] In other contexts it can mean "young lineage member."[80] In this case, Yu-Kan Ch'ok can be interpreted as "his young sky sprout," perhaps referring to this artist's young age and experience although he belonged to the artist lineage. It could also be interpreted as "his young serpent sprout," which could be a reference to Calakmul, claiming that he was a young lineage member of the snake polity. Unfortunately, the correct identification is unclear. The outlines of two eroded secondary texts can be seen on the strips of cloth that hang to either side of the xok motif: one recorded in at least two glyph blocks and one recorded in at least three glyph blocks (i1, i2, i3 and j1, j2). These two eroded texts do not seem to give the names of artists because the yu-xul title does not appear to be recorded here. Beyond this fact, little more can be ascertained.

On Na Kan Ajaw's scepter, another signature can be seen. Again, this individual is identifiable as an artist based on the presence of the yu-xul glyph (a1). His name appears to be Kan Tok' Mo'l (a2, a3), which means "yellow or precious flint." The last part of his name is eroded, but appears to record Mo'l, the name of the eighth Maya month. Kan seems to be a common name among the artists on stela 34, appearing in five of the eight artist names. Research with early Spanish sources has revealed that the Yukatek name Kan, and the Cholan equivalent Chan, may represent a family name or artist lineage.[81] This discovery may also help to explain the use of the ch'ok title as well. If these individuals belonged to elite lineages and were members of the king's court, their signatures attest to the social status of artists at El Peru.

Located to the left of the scepter's handle held by Na Kan Ajaw is another artist's signature. The text begins with the yu-xul glyph (b1) fol-

b1–b4

yu-xul

Y-ajawte

Man

Ajaw

lowed by a royal title read *Y-ajawte* (b2). Again, since this title contains the possessive *ya* prefix, the meaning of y-ajaw here indicates that this artist was the "lord of" or a "vassal lord" to another king. The next glyph appears to be a toponym either for a particular location within El Peru or for a site somewhere in the Yaxchilan/Piedras Negras region of the western Maya lowlands known as Man (b3).[82] This location appears on texts on both monuments and ceramics throughout this region and thus this artist probably hails from Man. The last glyph in his name phrase is the ajaw title used here to emphasize that this artist was the "lord or vassal lord of the Man king." Perhaps this polity was also under the Calakmul hegemony and this artist was sent to El Peru to help carve the monument. From artist signatures found on monuments at more than one site, it is clear that sculptors sometimes traveled to work on monuments.[83]

To the right of the scepter are the faint outlines of a four glyph block text almost entirely effaced (c1, c2, c3, c4). To the right of this inscription is the last artist's signature on stela 34. This individual is named with the yu-xul glyph (d1) but only the outlines of the next two glyph blocks (d2, d3) remain. Beyond that, nothing can be read with any certainty. The last secondary text recorded on stela 34, directly to the left of Na Kan Ajaw's face, does not appear to be an artist's name. The first glyph (e1) appears to be a title naming the individual as a "south" divinity or lord. This reading is further verified by the next glyph (e2), which records an unusual version of the *ch'ul* or *k'ul* title with a *wa* verbal suffix meaning "holied" or "divined" in Cholan and Yukatec, respectively.[84] This honorific title was used by Maya elites to describe themselves as "divine." In this case, the person named here was called a "south divine" person. The second part of this individual's name is B'alam (Jaguar) (e3); thus South Divine Jaguar is the name of the individual recorded in this secondary text. Who South Divine Jaguar was is not certain, but a reference to K'inich B'alam is possible. Following this name is a group of three titles that call this individual the Kan Winik Ch'ok Ajaw (e4, e5, e6), which may refer to the South Divine Jaguar as a "young sky person lord," indicating elite status as a young member of a lineage group. If this text refers to K'inich B'alam, these titles may refer to his enhanced rank as Na Kan Ajaw's spouse. Through marriage to a member of the Calakmul royal family, K'inich B'alam may have joined her lineage group.

c1–c4

yu-xul

d1–d3

e1–e6

south

ch'ulwa

B'alam

Kan Winik

Ch'ok

Ajaw

The presence of so many artist signatures on stela 34 leads to more questions than answers. Why would eight or more artists have participated in the creation of this stela and how was their labor allocated? As suggested above, the master artist (Aj Chuk Ajaw) was probably responsible for the "smudging or staining" of the image. There is evidence to suggest that someone else carved the monument in the use of the title Aj Mux Tok' (he of the flint composition). Finally, one artist may have been an apprentice who was responsible for the stone (Kanaj Mutun). Whatever role each artist had in the creation of stela 34, their contributions were evidently considered worthy of public recognition within the context of this monument to elite ritual and political activities.

Stela 34 exemplifies the beauty and grace of Maya monumental sculpture. Na Kan Ajaw's garb and accouterments are richly symbolic. Dressed in the guise of the maize god and accompanied by an elegantly attired dwarf, she commemorates the passage of the twelfth k'atun under the aegis of Jaguar Paw Fire. From the accompanying hieroglyphic inscription, it is clear that the featured event was the erection of stela 34, on 15 March 692, to commemorate Jaguar Paw Fire's accession as ruler of Calakmul some six years earlier, and to link this event to the important k'atun ending. In addition, the appearance of twelve secondary texts surrounding the image of Na Kan Ajaw name at least eight individual artists responsible for the creation of this monument. Their signatures testify to contemporary appreciation of their skills as elite artists and sculptors. Stela 34 represents a pivotal point in Maya artistic tradition. Beginning at about this time, Maya society began to slowly decline. Warfare escalated as polities fought for control over natural resources and new territories. During the next two hundred years, city-states collapsed and were abandoned, bringing an end to almost one thousand years of artistic tradition. Stela 34 represents the pinnacle of that tradition.

NOTES

My thanks to Margaret Young-Sánchez, associate curator of Art of Africa, the Americas, and Oceania at the Cleveland Museum of Art, for her encouragement and help in preparing this article. Her editorial comments were helpful, and she provided stunning photographs of stela 34, which helped my research immensely. What is more, Margaret allowed John Montgomery and me to study stela 34 up close. My thanks also to John Montgomery for his help producing a new set of line drawings of stela 34. John's drawings were a crucial part of this analysis. Finally, I wish to thank those who commented on preliminary drafts of this article, especially Peter Dunham, Federico Fahsen, Ian Graham, Nikolai Grube, Steve Houston, Peter Mathews, and Linda Schele.

1. Stela; Maya, Late Classic period, AD 692; El Peru, Guatemala; limestone, 274.4 x 182.3 x 5 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, J. H. Wade Fund 1967.29. Publications: *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 54 (1967), 338, fig. 42, 342; *Cleveland Museum of Art Handbook* (1969), 293; Jeffrey Miller, "Notes on a Stelae Pair Probably from Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico," in *First Palenque Round Table, Part 1*, ed. Merle Greene Robertson (San Francisco, 1974); Karl Herbert Mayer, *Maya Monuments: Sculptures of Unknown Provenance in the United States* (Ramona, Calif., 1980), 22–24, pl. 31; Joyce Marcus, *Emblem and State in the Classic Maya Lowlands: An Epigraphical Approach to Territorial Organization* (Washington, D.C., 1976), 51–53, 156, 169.

2. Maya phrases and words appear in Yukatek Maya unless stated otherwise. The term for a stone stela is *lakam tun* (grand stone), see Alfredo Barrera Vásquez, ed., *Diccionario Maya Cordemex: Maya-Español, Español-Maya* (Merida, 1980), 434 and 822.

3. Miller, "Notes on a Stelae Pair."

4. Joyce Marcus, "Territorial Organization of the Lowland Maya," *Science* 180 (1973), 911–16. The term "emblem glyph," first proposed by Heinrich Berlin ("El glifo 'emblema' en las inscripciones Mayas," *Journal de la Société des Americanistes de Paris*, n.s. 47 [1958], 111–19), is a name given to a category of glyphs that represent the name of a particular city or polity.

5. Miller, "Notes on a Stelae Pair." His argument was presented at the first Mesa Redonda de Palenque, held in Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico, 14–22 December 1973.

6. Ibid.; Ian Graham, "Homeless Hieroglyphs," *Antiquity* 62 (1988), 124. The traditional spelling of the site, "Calakmul," has been used throughout this article.

7. The Calakmul emblem glyph incorporates the T40 *k'ul* (divine) prefix, the T168 *ajaw* (lord) suffix, and the T764 snake-head sign *kan* (snake or sky) (the figures with the "T" prefix, or "Thompson numbers," refer to J. Eric Thompson's compilation, see Thompson, *A Catalogue of Maya Hieroglyphs* [Norman, Okla., 1962]). In some examples of the snake-head emblem glyph, the main sign, kan, has a prefix, a complementary *ka* syllable. In addition, the main sign can also contain an optional *la* suffix, representing the nominal inflection. Thus the Calakmul emblem glyph can be read as K'ul Kan or Kan(al) Ajaw ("Divine Snake Lord"). Peter Mathews undertook a study of texts that mention the snake-head site and realized that this emblem glyph appeared in many foreign texts outside Calakmul ("Notes on the Inscriptions of 'Site Q,'" unpublished manuscript, 1979). Uncomfortable with the Calakmul identification, he simply referred to those texts as coming from an undiscovered site he nicknamed "Site Q." Today, based on the many appearances of the snake-head glyph at Calakmul, there is no question that the snake-head emblem refers to the Calakmul polity.

8. Graham, "Homeless Hieroglyphs," 125.

9. Karl Andreas Taube, "The Classic Maya Maize God: A Reappraisal," in *Fifth Palenque Round Table, 1983*, ed. Merle Greene Robertson (San Francisco, 1985), 7:174–79; Linda Schele and David Freidel, *A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya* (New York, 1990), 414–15.

10. Karl Andreas Taube, *The Major Gods of the Ancient Yucatan*, Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology, no. 32 (Washington, D.C., 1992), 41–50; Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* (London, 1993), 108–9.

11. Miller and Taube, *Gods and Symbols*, 82.

12. The Maya celebrated the ending of k'atuns as birthdays of creation. Because most rulers could only be associated with one, two, or three k'atun endings in their lifetimes, the celebrations had great importance. The passage of a k'atun also changed the well-being or luck of the whole and provided a new set of gods wielding new powers. Rulers also built monuments to commemorate these passages of time, see J. Eric Thompson, *Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: An Introduction* (Washington, D.C., 1950), 181.

13. Schele and Freidel, *Forest of Kings*, 414; Miller and Taube, *Gods and Symbols*, 45.

14. Miller and Taube, *Gods and Symbols*, 45.

15. Schele and Freidel, *Forest of Kings*, 408.

16. Miller and Taube, *Gods and Symbols*, 45.

17. Marvin Cohodas, "The Bicephalic Monster in Classic Maya Sculpture," *Anthropologica* 24 (1982), 126–27.

18. David Freidel, Linda Schele, and Joy Parker, *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path* (New York, 1993), 182.

19. This concept still exists among contemporary Maya peoples. According to Evon Z. Vogt, "Virtually everything important and valuable to Zinacantecos also possesses a Ch'ulel: domestic animals and plants, salt, houses and household fires, crosses, the saints, musical instruments, maize, and other deities in the pantheon. The most important interaction in all the universe is not between persons and objects, but among the innate souls of persons and material objects" (*Tortillas for the Gods: A Symbolic Analysis of Zinacanteco Rituals* [Cambridge, Mass., 1976], 18–19). On linguistic and iconographic grounds, several researchers believe that the ancient Maya shared similar beliefs.

20. Marvin Cohodas, "Bicephalic Monster," 127.

21. Freidel, Schele, and Parker, *Maya Cosmos*, 217.

22. Stephen D. Houston and David Stuart, *The Way Glyph: Evidence for "Co-essences" among the Classic Maya*, Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing 30, Center for Maya Research (Washington, D.C., 1989), 5.

23. Miller and Taube, *Gods and Symbols*, 149–50.

24. Na Kan Ajaw's personal name appears to be written with the T851 *nal* sign, the T713a *k'a* or *k'al* sign, and the T188 *le* sign. Her personal name may read as either Nal K'al or K'al Nal, depending whether the nal sign is read first or last. In toponymic expressions, the nal sign is usually read last, but this does not appear to be a toponymic expression because of the T1000 female prefix sign *na*. Nal can mean "ear, stalk, or cob of corn" and k'al can mean either the number 20 or "to close" (Barrera Vásquez, *Diccionario Maya Cordemex*,

557, 367). Thus her personal name may read Lady "20" Ear, a tentative translation, see Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube, "Evidence for Macro-Political Organization amongst Classic Maya Lowland States" (unpublished manuscript, 1994), 17.

25. Tom Jones, "Jaws II: Return of the Xoc," in *Sixth Palenque Round Table 1986*, ed. Merle Greene Robertson (Norman, Okla., and London, 1991), 214–15.

26. Miller, "Notes on a Stelae Pair," 154.

27. Dicey Taylor, "Painted Ladies: Costumes for Women on Tepeu Ceramics," in *The Maya Vase Book* (New York, 1989–), 3:522.

28. Miller and Taube, *Gods and Symbols*, 110.

29. Walter F. Morris, Jr., *Living Maya* (New York, 1988), 110.

30. Ibid., 112.

31. The earthlord, a divine being, controls the powers of wind, water, thunder, and rain. He lives in the mountaintops, where he can oversee and control the riches of the earth (ibid., 33 and 109).

32. Miller, "Notes on a Stelae Pair," 154.

33. Schele and Freidel, *Forest of Kings*, 274–75.

34. The substances considered holy or divine by the ancient Maya included blood, semen, dew, nectar, and the secretions of trees. Maya rulers scattered these types of offerings during ceremonies celebrating the end of important time cycles.

35. Freidel, Schele, and Parker, *Maya Cosmos*, 270–71.

36. Miller and Taube, *Gods and Symbols*, 82.

37. Schele and Freidel, *Forest of Kings*, 418.

38. From archaeological excavations at Copan it is clear that the witz monster could transform temples into sacred living mountains. The heart of the mountain or temple was the place of transformation and the portal to the underworld where rulers communicated with their ancestors, see Freidel, Schele, and Parker, *Maya Cosmos*, 151.

39. Joyce Marcus, *The Inscriptions of Calakmul: Royal Marriage at a Maya City in Campeche, Mexico*, Technical Report 21, University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology (Ann Arbor, 1987), 58.

40. Ibid., 62.

41. Miller and Taube, *Gods and Symbols*, 184.

42. Calakmul was first discovered in 1931 by Cyrus Lundell. The name means "City of Two Adjacent Pyramids," see Karl Ruppert and John H. Denison, Jr., *Archaeological Reconnaissance in Campeche, Quintana Roo, and Peten*, Publication 543, Carnegie Institution of Washington (Washington, D.C., 1943), 13.

43. Simon Martin and Nicolai Grube, "Maya Superstates," *Archaeology* 48, no. 6 (1995), 44–45.

44. Miller, "Notes on a Stelae Pair," 158; Schele and Freidel, *Forest of Kings*, 181.

45. Martin and Gube, "Maya Superstates," 45. Because El Peru has not been studied in great detail, much of this argument is based on preliminary evidence. The original name of the El Peru polity during Late Classic times was K'ul Wak Ajaw, see Linda Schele and Nicolai Grube, *The Proceedings of the Maya Hieroglyphic Workshop: Tlaloc-Venus Warfare*, ed. Phil Wanyerka (Cleveland, 1994), 164.

46. See note 49 below for an explanation of Maya dates.

47. Simon Martin, *Calakmul en el Registro Epigrafico* (Mexico City, 1994), 15; Sylvanus G. Morley, *Inscriptions of the Peten*, Publication no. 437, Carnegie Institute of Washington (Washington, D.C., 1937), 313–41; David Stuart and Stephen Houston, *Classic Maya Place Names*, Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology, no. 33 (Washington, D.C., 1994), 28–29.

48. Schele and Grube, *Proceedings of the Maya Hieroglyphic Workshop*, 163–64; Martin, *Calakmul en el Registro Epigrafico*, 27.

49. The Maya calendar consists of three parts: a cyclical part known as the calendar round, a linear part known as the long count, and a lunar count or supplemental series. The calendar round has two separate calendars. The first consists of a 260-day cycle known as the *tzolkin*. The tzolkin calendar combines 13 day numbers (1–13) cycling with 20 day names, and thus each day has both a new day number and new day name. This calendar repeats over and over, with each

of the 260 days given a unique number and name combination. The second cycle, known as the *jaab,* consists of a 365-day calendar closely matching the solar year. This calendar has 20 numbers (1–20) cycling with 18 month names, but the month name stays the same for 20 days, then changes to the next in the sequence. These two separate cycles, when combined, produce a date that will take 52 years to repeat. The calendar round notation is commonly used in texts where a base date has already been established; however, because this date could repeat every 52 years, another calendar, known as the long count, is also used to count linear time since Maya creation or the start of the current calendar. To record linear time, the Maya developed a system that records a series of five numbers, each representing a specific number of days. When these time periods are added together, they state the number of days that have passed since the zero date of the calendar, which began, according to the Gregorian calendar, on 11 August 3114 BC.

The Maya used the following units of time for the long count: *k'ins* represented the number of single days, 20 k'ins represented 1 *winal* or month, 18 winals represented 360 days or 1 *tun* (roughly 1 year), 20 tuns represented 7,200 days or 1 *k'atun* (roughly 20 tuns), and 20 k'atuns represented 144,000 days or 1 *b'aktun* (roughly 400 tuns). The Maya usually recorded these periods of time largest to smallest and then combined the tzolkin and jaab calendars, respectively, to place a date in recorded history.

A breakdown of a typical long count date, 9.8.9.13.0, follows:

9 b'aktuns (20 k'atuns = 144,000 days)	9 x	144,000 =	1,296,000
8 k'atuns (20 tuns = 7,200 days)	8 x	7,200 =	57,600
9 tuns (18 winals = 360 days)	9 x	360 =	3,240
13 winals (20 days)	13 x	20 =	260
0 k'ins (1 days)	0 x	1 =	0
Total			1,357,100 days

The number of days added together from this long count date equals the number of days that have elapsed since the start of the Maya calendar. In this case, 1,357,100 days divided by the Maya year (360 days) equals 3,769.7222 years. By subtracting 3,114 from 3,769 (the start date of the Maya calendar), the year reached is AD 655.

The last component to a long count date is the calendar round, which is used to establish firmly the day and month on which the date fell. For example, the calendar round date for 9.8.9.13.0 is 8 Ajaw 13 Pop, meaning the long count date fell on the 8th day (named Ajaw) in the 260-day calendar and on the 13th day of the month (named Pop) in the 365-day calendar. Thus, the three calendars run consecutively and can be used to establish a date in Maya history. The last component to the long count date is the lunar count (supplementary series). This series of glyphs records lunar information for that day. Each glyph within the supplementary series is given an alphabetic designation. For example, the first glyph in the series is known as glyph G. It records a place in a 9-day cycle of gods known as the lords of the night. Tied closely to glyph G is glyph F, which refers to the "closing of the headdress" that the god named in glyph G wears. Apparently, each of the nine gods in this cycle wears a different headdress, as depicted in their respective hieroglyphs, and glyph F simply refers to "fastening or closing" a headdress as a symbolic metaphor for wearing a specific headdress. Next in the series are glyphs E and D, which record the number of days that have passed in the current lunation. Glyph C records the number of total lunation cycles in the lunar half year. Glyph B records the name of the current lunation, much like in our calendar where the moon has been given various names to describe its appearance. For example, during the late summer or early fall the moon is described as being a "harvest moon." The Maya used this same sort of designation to describe the appearance of the moon. The last glyph in the supplementary series, glyph A, records the total number of days in the current lunation, which was always 29 or 30 days. Together, the long count and the supplementary series define Maya dates in linear time and, when combined with the calendar round, lock these dates into a firm time line that will not repeat for thousands of years.

Because of the nature of these cyclical calendars, epigraphers can easily

reconstruct Maya dates even if components to any one of the cycles are missing in a hieroglyphic text. Today, computers do most of the work in reconstructing Maya dates; however, all computations can be worked out by hand.

50. The term "distance number" is used to describe a period of time leading from one date to another. By using a secure calendar round date recorded on the front of stela 34, a possible long count window can be established using the day 6 Manik' 5 Sip (9.12.13.17.7) and a computer. The text records additional information stating that the distance number was to be added from a 3 Ajaw date (B9). The only possible reconstruction for the missing coefficient of the distance number is 2 tuns. By adding 2.17.4 (2 tuns, 17 winals, and 4 k'ins) from the day simply recorded as 3 Ajaw, the date arrived at is 1 K'an 12 Sotz'. Using the 3 Ajaw as an anchor, a possible long count date of 9.12.5.0.0 (3 Ajaw 3 Xul) can be determined. When the distance number of 2.17.4 is added to 9.12.5.0.0, the date reached is 9.12.7.17.4 (1 K'an 12 Sotz').

51. Barrera Vásquez, *Diccionario Maya Cordemex,* 282.

52. Unfortunately, not enough survives of the text on stela 34 to ascertain if the yukom title was recorded.

53. For a discussion of Maya units of time, see note 49 above.

54. Barrera Vásquez, *Diccionario Maya Cordemex,* 371, 387.

55. Ibid., 878.

56. Ibid., 434.

57. Mathews, *Notes on the Inscriptions of "Site Q."*

58. Barrera Vásquez, *Diccionario Maya Cordemex,* 21.

59. Linda Schele, "A Brief Note on the Name of a Vision Serpent," in *Maya Vase Book,* 1:147.

60. Michael D. Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code* (New York, 1992), 72.

61. Linda Schele and Khristaan Villela, "The Helmet of the Chakte," *Texas Notes on Precolumbian Art, Writing, and Culture,* no. 63 (Austin, 1994), 1.

62. Barrera Vásquez, *Diccionario Maya Cordemex,* 4.

63. Ibid., 502.

64. Stephen D. Houston, "A Name Glyph for Classic Maya Dwarfs," in *Maya Vase Book,* 3:528.

65. Virginia Miller, "The Dwarf Motif in Classic Maya Art," in *Fourth Palenque Round Table, 1980,* ed. Merle Greene Robertson (San Francisco, 1985), 6:143.

66. Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code,* 252; John Ellis Montgomery, "Sculptors of the Realm: Classic Maya Artists' Signatures and Sculptural Style During the Reign of Piedras Negras Ruler 7" (master's thesis, University of New Mexico, 1995), 35.

67. Montgomery, *Sculptors of the Realm,* 18.

68. Ibid., 29; Carolyn E. Tate, *Yaxchilan: The Design of a Maya Ceremonial City* (Austin, 1992), 39–49.

69. Montgomery, *Sculptors of the Realm,* 590–91.

70. The yu-xul glyph is composed of the T61 *yu* syllable sign and the T767 *xu* (bat head) syllable sign. In addition, a T568 *lu* phonetic complement is usually found as the ear of the bat for the final "l" sound of the word "yu-xul."

71. Montgomery, *Sculptors of the Realm,* 7.

72. Barrera Vásquez, *Diccionario Maya Cordemex,* 955.

73. Ibid., 111.

74. Ibid., 295.

75. Ibid., 543, 805.

76. Ibid., 962.

77. Ibid., 291, 374.

78. Ibid., 291.

79. Terrence S. Kauffman and William M. Norman, "An Outline of Proto-Cholan Phonology, Morphology and Vocabulary," in *Phoneticism in Mayan Hieroglyphic Writing,* eds. John S. Justeson and Lyle Campbell (Albany, N.Y., 1984), 119.

80. Freidel, Schele, and Parker, *Maya Cosmos,* 358.

81. Montgomery, *Sculptors of the Realm,* 611–15.

82. Schele and Grube, *Proceedings of the Maya Hieroglyphic Workshop,* 166–67.

83. Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code,* 251.

84. Barrera Vásquez, *Diccionario Maya Cordemex,* 421.

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